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POLICE ADMINISTRATION

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Commissioner of the Department of Police

THE police force in New York city numbers just short of eleven thousand men, and the cost to the city yearly to support it is about eighteen million dollars. The force is divided, roughly, into two departments: the uniformed force and the detective bureau.

The detective bureau is used primarily, as its name indicates, to detect criminals. It comes into operation after the crime has been committed—in other words, after a criminal has outwitted the patrolling force and, in spite of them, has managed to commit a crime. The duty of the detective bureau is to apprehend the criminal, and to recover stolen property.

There are, and probably always will be, discussions as to the amount of centralization or decentralization which should govern the organization of a detective bureau. In England the tendency is toward decentralization; in Germany the detective forces are highly centralized, although there seems to be a movement now toward relaxing the highly centralized organization in favor of local subdivisions. In New York we have a combination of the two systems, in the effort to adapt the best features of both to the local conditions here. Our detective bureau proper comprises about six hundred men. They are divided into nine branch bureaus; four in Manhattan, one in The Bronx, two in Brooklyn, one in Queens and one in Staten Island. Each one of these branch bureaus is a complete organization in itself, and handles crime that occurs in the locality which it covers.

Besides these local branch bureaus divided geographically there are also operating from police headquarters a number of squads made up of men who are skilled in the particular kind of crime which they are assigned to work on. These special men working from headquarters operate in all parts of the city. There are special squads, for instance, dealing with homicides, with habit-forming drugs, with loft burglaries, with pickpockets, with

mendicants, with white slave traffickers, with gunmen, with automobile thieves, with unidentified dead, and with missing persons.

Complete files of all cases are kept in the central filing bureau at police headquarters, and duplicate records are kept at the different branch bureaus with reference to their local cases. Such records must be complete, yet it is of great importance to the effectiveness of detective work that individual detectives be not too much burdened with the duty of writing out detailed reports. The best man at catching thieves often is hard put to it when he comes to write what would seem to be a simple report. To meet this situation, we are now working toward a system by which stenographers will be assigned to each branch bureau. They will do all the mechanical work of making up reports, leaving the detectives free to do the work for which they are best fitted.

The police commissioner by law is empowered, at his discretion, to designate not more than 150 detectives "first grade," which means that their salary is equal to that of a police lieutenant, \$2,250 per annum. It is of supreme importance that the men in the bureau should have absolute confidence that the sole way to obtain first grade is by doing better detective work than the other men. If there should be a suspicion in the minds of the men that the way to first grade is through the influence of powerful friends the efficiency of the detective bureau would suffer seriously. In order to make it sure that the 150 first-grade detectives shall be the 150 men in the bureau who are doing the best detective work, we are trying to devise a scheme of records, which shall show exactly what kind of work each detective is doing. It is extraordinarily difficult to devise such a record, since the quality of detective work is something that does not lend itself easily to expression in terms of figures and percentages. If, on the other hand, we try to rate the men without written records, basing the rating upon the judgment of the men's work by superior officers, suspicions of favoritism are bound to enter in.

Very careful records of crimes reported are kept, so that we shall know exactly what crimes are being committed, and in just what localities. These records are not merely kept by figures showing the different kinds of crime committed in the different precincts, but they are also graphically represented on charts,

different symbols being used for different crimes; so that by a glance at the map of any locality of the greater city we can see just what crimes have been committed there, and we are therefore in a position to maneuver the police forces to meet any situation which arises. Without such elaborate systems as this there would be no way of giving prompt and adequate attention to actual localities where bands of criminals may have started operating.

Although the prime function of the detective bureau is to detect crime which has been committed, in actual practise it is found best to have detectives also do a large amount of preventive work. To this end, detectives are regularly assigned to car lines, terminals, and districts where different crimes are likely to be committed, for the purpose of taking such action as shall deter the criminal from any attempt to commit crime. Many criminals are said to be unwilling to work in localities unless they can arrange beforehand with the police to be undisturbed. When General Bingham was police commissioner, there were many complaints of pocket picking on a certain car line in the city. Two detectives had been assigned to that car line for a long time to prevent pocket picking. A bill was passed, giving the police commissioner power to transfer out of the detective bureau such men as he deemed best, and upon the passage of the bill the police commissioner transferred these two detectives to do work in uniform. From that day on complaints of pocket picking on that car line ceased.

The uniformed force is primarily a preventive force. The men patrol the streets for the purpose of making it difficult for a criminal to commit a crime. We have given much study during the past year to methods of patrol, with the idea of giving to each different kind of locality in the city the particular method of patrol which is best adapted to prevent crime there. It is easy to see, for instance, that a scheme of patrol which would work best in the crowded quarters of Manhattan would be wholly unfitted to the outlying districts of Queens. In general the system that we are instituting in the more sparsely settled communities, where the distances are great, comprises the establishment of a large number of sub-stations,—small booths in which bicycle policemen are on duty at all hours of the day and night, connected with the station-house by the regular police wire, and with the nearest

telephone central by an outside wire. This means that anyone in need of the services of a policeman can call him quickly by telephone, and he can respond quickly on a bicycle. The patrol of such localities is done on bicycles or motorcycles. A horse is of little value for such police work; on an eight-hour tour of duty a mounted man cannot cover much more ground than a man afoot, whereas a man on a bicycle can cover far more territory and can leave his machine in case of need far more quickly than a mounted man can leave his horse.

In the more closely settled parts of the city the old system of foot patrol with short posts is the best. In combination with this, however, we are instituting a series of signal flash-lights. A policeman is in sight of one of these lights at all times. By pushing a button a civilian who needs a policeman can flash the light. It can also be flashed from the station-house by the sergeant at the desk. By this means a person needing a policeman quickly can call him either by running to the box and flashing the light himself, or by telephoning to police headquarters and having the station-house flash the light, then speaking to the policeman who responds on the telephone, and sending him where he is needed.

Besides the ordinary patrolling of the uniformed force, there are almost 600 men whose first duty is to regulate traffic. Most of these are on foot, but there are others on bicycles, motorcycles and horses. A man mounted on a horse is of great value in the regulation of traffic. He can get to a congested spot quickly in case of need, and from his position on the horse he can see over the traffic, and often prevent a traffic tangle which otherwise would tie up things for some time. We are emphasizing more and more the fact that traffic regulation is concerned principally with making the streets safe. The large number of accidents in our streets calls for strong action. A committee of five inspectors was appointed some months ago to deal with the question of street safety; we now have reports about each accident that occurs in the streets, from which we can generalize so as to find out the causes of all accidents. This has never been possible in the city before. As a result of this we believe that we are progressing in meeting an urgent situation.

The harbor squad comprises a fleet of a dozen launches, which

patrol the waters of the harbor just as the men on land patrol the streets.

In connection with the uniformed force, a large number of men work in plain clothes. They are employed in the work of enforcing sumptuary laws, the laws which deal with our manners and customs and vices, rather than our crimes. These men work under the direction of the inspectors of districts. The whole question of the regulation of public morals is one of the most difficult that the department has to deal with, the main sources of the difficulty being that this is primarily not a police duty at all—European police forces are not saddled with it—and that laws are made by the state, whereas enforcement lies with the city. Out of this duty of regulating public morals have arisen all the police scandals so familiar to us. If this city had a reasonable measure of home rule in regulating its own affairs I believe that a large part of these troubles would be avoided.

I have said that the work of the detective bureau is primarily that of arresting a criminal who has committed a crime, and that the work of the uniformed force is primarily that of trying to prevent a criminal from committing a crime. These are the two conventional forms of police activity. We have been trying to go a step further and to use the power of the police to prevent people from becoming criminals. Unemployment and poverty are two great sources of criminal acts. This winter the police, in their duty of suppressing crime, have found work for the large number of men and have given relief to the large number of emergency cases that keep coming to their attention. You will be interested to know that out of a fund of \$2,800 subscribed for this purpose over \$1,900 was given by policemen. We are not only trying to relieve the emergency, but also to put the individual in touch with some individual or organization that will interest itself in the case and assist intelligently until the person in trouble is again on his feet.

We have made it possible for children to play on certain chosen blocks without the danger of being mowed down by vehicles. They are thus given a wholesome vent for their natural activity, instead of being tempted to unlawful acts. Some of the police captains have started junior police forces, organizing the boys in

a neighborhood in such a way as to put them on the side of law and order instead of against it. This movement, together with other movements for the welfare of growing boys, gives promise of being effective in reducing crime.

A great many minor offenses are committed by persons through ignorance. This is especially true of a city which has a population of the size and complexity of New York. The police are trying to treat such offenders in a human way, helping them to understand and comply with the laws and ordinances by advice and warning before proceeding to the extreme of serving a summons or making an arrest. The results attending this work have been very gratifying. If an immigrant finds himself haled before a court for doing something which in itself is not wrong, and which he did with no wrong intent, he comes to the conclusion that this free country of ours is as arbitrary a place as the country he came from, and that the police and the government, of which the police are to him the only visible expression, are autocratic and natural enemies. This sort of thing is a hotbed of law-breaking and violence, and I believe thoroughly that the police, by intelligent and painstaking efforts, can not merely attain a far greater degree of compliance with the ordinances, but can also instil into newly-arrived foreigners a wholly different conception of what our government is.

Out of the eighteen million dollars which goes to support the police force annually, only about three hundred thousand is spent on administration. This is too small. If the city is to spend almost seventeen million dollars for salaries and pensions of policemen, it is short-sighted not to spend enough for administration to make certain that the results of the large expenditure are all that they should be. The administration would be far more effective, also, if the men on the force felt that the administration had a longer lease of life than history shows it to have had recently in New York. If the head of the force and the policies of the force are to change every few months, you cannot blame a policeman for hesitating as to the character of police duty which it is worth while and safe for him to perform.

The police force cannot be, in this country, a military organization. From the very nature of the work the men cannot, like soldiers, be kept in squads and combinations, always under the

eye of a superior officer. They must work alone. This means that they must be animated by the right kind of spirit and ambition. We are trying to make it clear to every man on the force that nothing can help him except good police work, and nothing can hurt him except poor police work. At times in the past men have been better able to get the good things that they wanted through good friends than through good work, and men have often suffered, in spite of doing good work, because that work happened to be directed against friends of people in power. I believe that the force now generally understands that the administration stands back of every policeman if he tries to do his honest duty, even if he makes a mistake. On the first day on which I took office, a little over a year ago, I sent out a general order allowing any policeman an interview with the commissioner at any time on any subject which he felt he wanted to talk about. I have repeatedly stated to the force—and believe I have lived up to it—that they will have a square deal without favoritism, without fear of what enemies can do against them, without expectation that improper influences can do anything for them.

The spirit of the force would be vastly improved if promotion could be made as a result of good police work. The civil service examinations, even although conducted with intelligence and integrity, are not successful in putting at the top of the list the men who have done the best work. Promotion, therefore, which is so desirable to a policeman, is looked upon as something unconnected with his success in performing his duty day by day.

The police problem here in New York is commonly believed to be very difficult. My conviction is that the difficulties are due, fundamentally, to three causes:

1. The uncertain tenure of office of the police commissioner, who is a sort of bird of passage, often flying so fast that the force have not time to determine his species.
2. The duty of regulating the public morals of the city according to laws imposed by an outside power.
3. The system of promotion, which I have just spoken of, which puts no ambition into the men to do good work day by day, and which does not make good work count for them, and does not make bad work count against them.

If we could correct these three conditions, we might diminish the number of interesting stories which absorb us from time to time in the public prints, but we should go far toward giving New York a police force which would be unequaled anywhere.

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